

NSC BRIEFING

28 August 1956

CYPRUS

1. An eleven-day unilateral "truce" declared by the Cypriot terrorist underground (EOKA) on 16 August, expired at midnight Monday and terrorist outbreaks on Cyprus will probably now resume.

A. EOKA's offer of the truce, "to allow Britain to show its good faith", was linked with demands that the British re-open negotiations for a settlement of the Cyprus crisis with exiled Archbishop Makarios no later than 27 August.

(1) EOKA's truce offer was probably inspired both by British successes in anti-terrorist operations on Cyprus and by the fear that popular support for EOKA was weakening.

B. Instead, Governor-General Harding on Cyprus demanded that the terrorists surrender and either go to Greece or face prosecution if they stay, and, on 27 August, London announced that captured documents proved the Archbishop to be the actual director of Cypriot terrorist activities and personally "involved in the choice of individual victims for murder".

2. Thus, the British are trying to discredit Makarios in the eyes of the Cypriot population, in hope that other nationalist leaders will come to the fore.

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B. We expect the British to continue their efforts to eradicate Cypriot terrorism and to take no significant steps toward a political settlement on the island until further success is achieved.

(1) In this connection, the British press has urged that the Archbishop be tried as a criminal.

3. Meanwhile, the Greek government had expressed the hope that Britain and the Cypriots would resume negotiations.

A. Athens is pledged to work for self-determination for Cyprus and intends to carry the matter to the UN this autumn.

B. The stability of the present Greek government is at stake over the Cyprus issue, since opposition accusations of inaction on Cyprus are gaining more popular support the longer a solution is postponed.

C. Almost the entire attention of the Greek government is concentrated on Cyprus, while vital domestic economic and financial measures are being postponed. This, too, adds to the shakiness of the present government and gives the opposition additional ammunition.

4. On the other side of the question, the Turkish view that the status quo must be maintained on Cyprus remains unaltered.

A. Turkish President Bayar restated Ankara's view in a 24 August conversation with US Ambassador Warren.

(1) Bayar characterized the Greek policy as "imperialist irredentist", and insisted that the only Greek interests were "sentiment and prestige that are not life-and-death matters."

(2) Bayer further stated that if Athens maintains pressure "lots of unpleasant questions"--such as the question of Turks in Greek Thrace, the transfer of Greeks from Istanbul and the status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchat in Istanbul--would arise.

B. The Turks consider Cyprus so vital to the defense of Turkey and the free world that control of the island must not fall to the Greeks, whose government, in Turkish opinion, is weak and susceptible to Communist influence.